

# Saga

BRIAN K. VAUGHAN FIONA STAPLES

EPISNER  
AWARD  
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CHAPTER  
THIRTEEN



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CHAPTER  
THIRTEEN

# Saga

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My artillery company was mopping up on a turd of a planet called Cleave.

We get word that a Wreath P.O.W. had escaped, taken his guard hostage. Orders were to kill them both.

Your orders were to *execute* one of your own?



S.O.P. when the brass is worried a friendly might end up as a terrorist bargaining chip.

But something tipped you off that Private First Class Alana was no longer a "friendly?"



When we engaged her --reluctantly, mind you --the moony completely lost it.

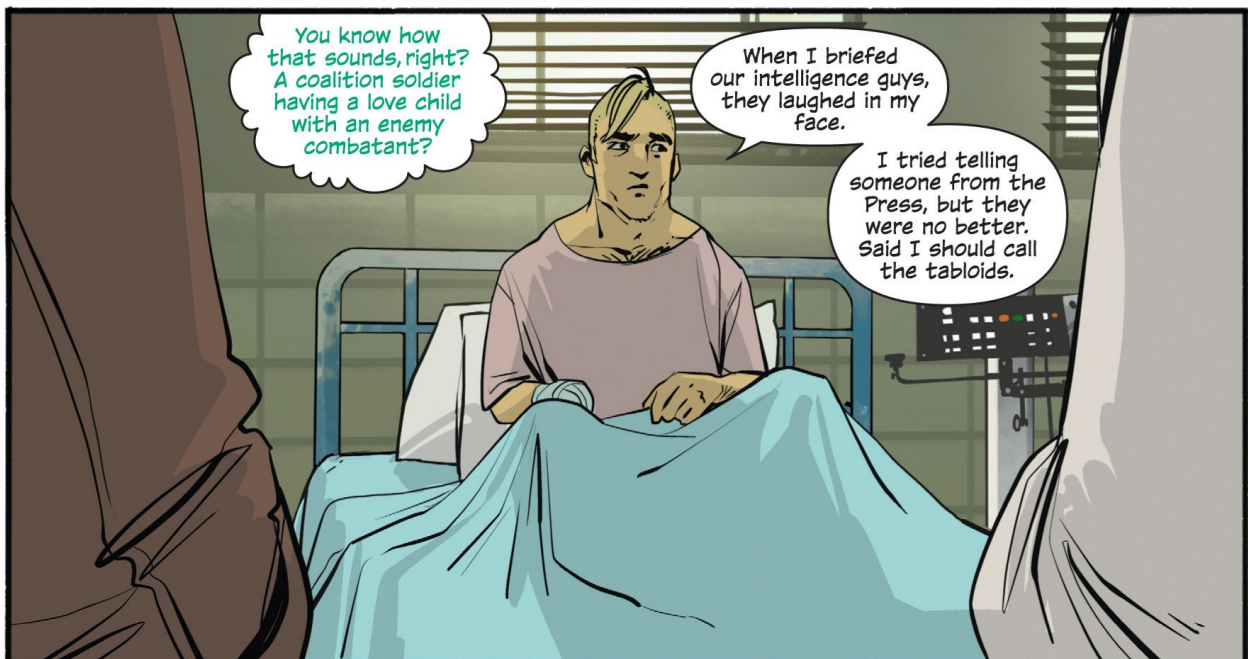
It was like we'd shot the girl who popped his cherry, not just some random winged shield.

And this object you claim she was holding...?



It wasn't an object, it was a baby. It was *their* baby.

You could tell by the way they looked at the thing.



You know how that sounds, right? A coalition soldier having a love child with an enemy combatant?

When I briefed our intelligence guys, they laughed in my face.

I tried telling someone from the Press, but they were no better. Said I should call the tabloids.





And  
we're very  
glad that  
you did.







Right, where  
were we?



Oh yeah, cutting across the  
Clockwork Stars on our way to a  
fog-shrouded world.

My parents were hoping  
to find a man named  
D. Oswald Heist, author of  
their favourite book.

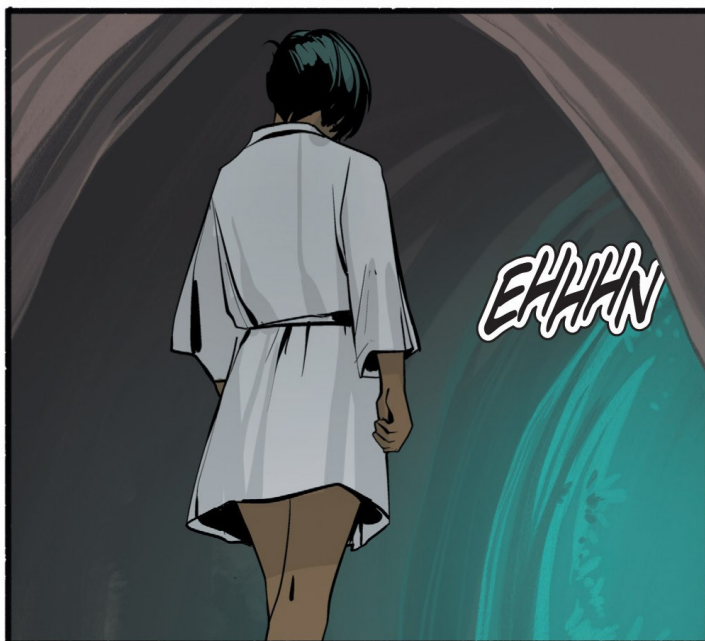


I had just  
shit myself.





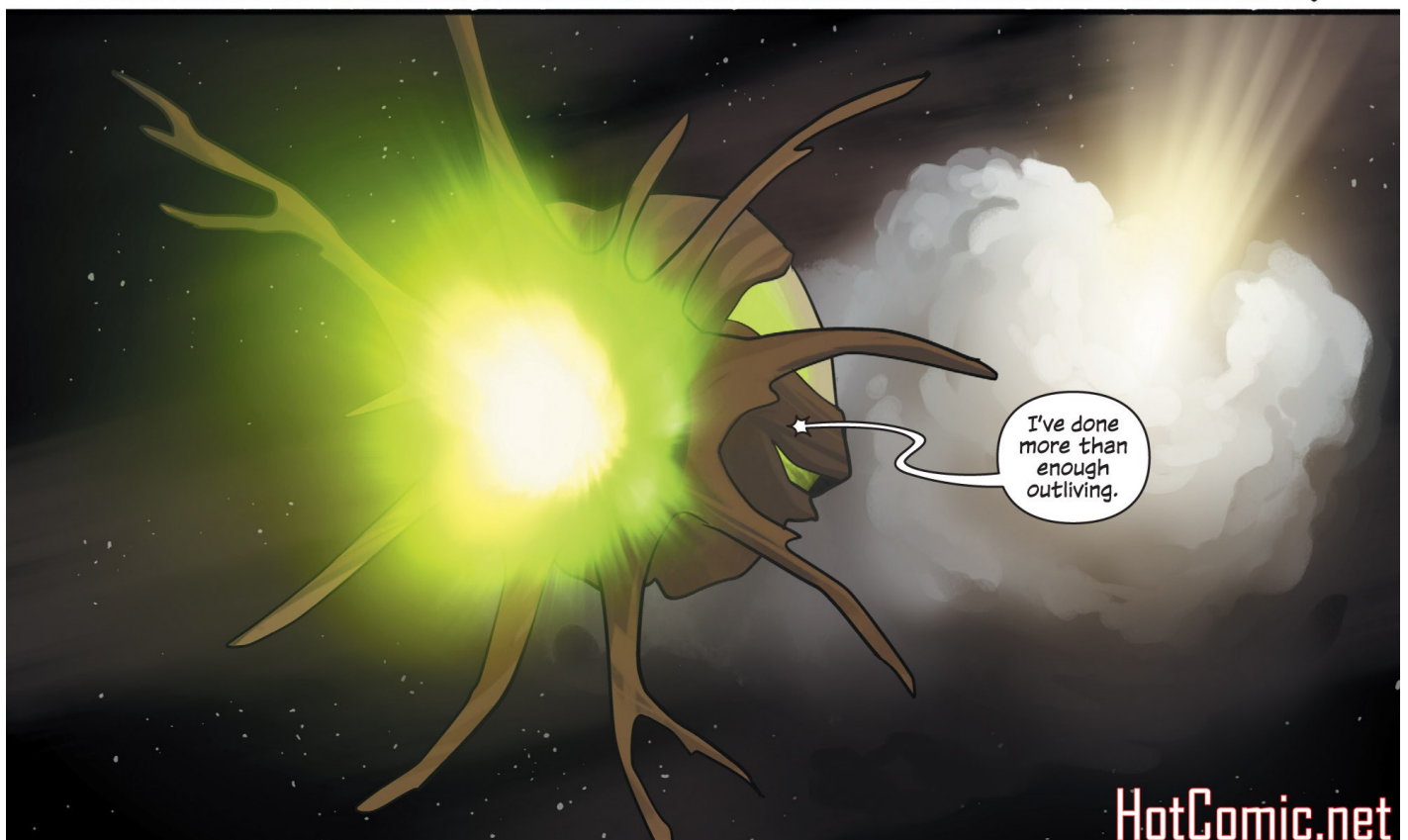
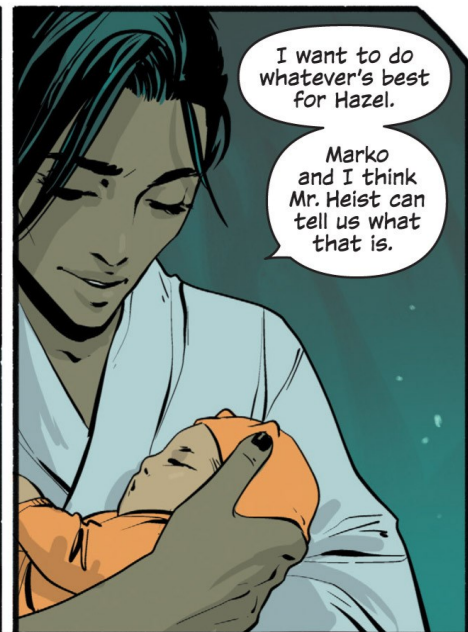




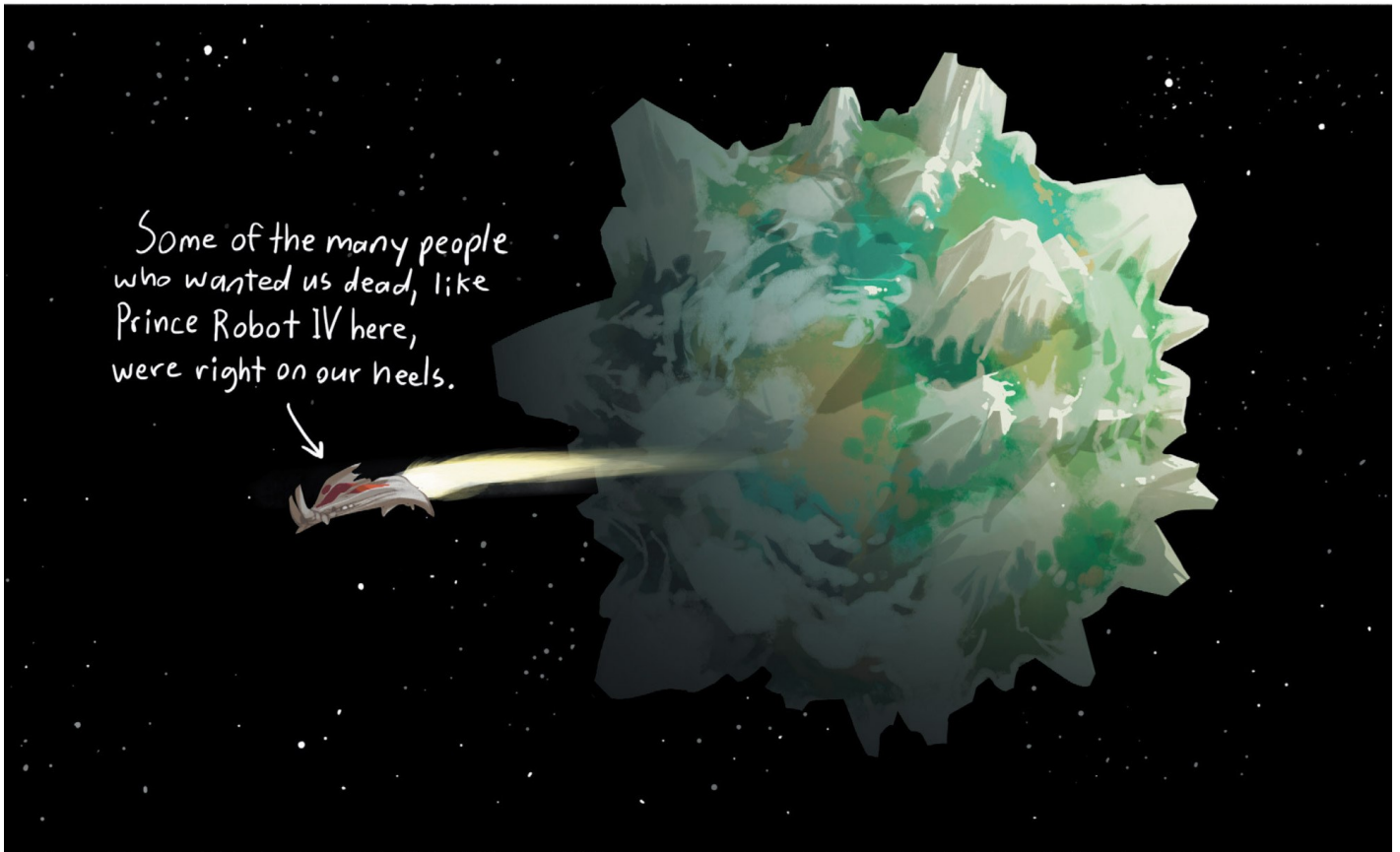
























Quietus was the first place my family ever laid down roots.



I haven't been back in years, but I can still remember the way Mom described its smell.



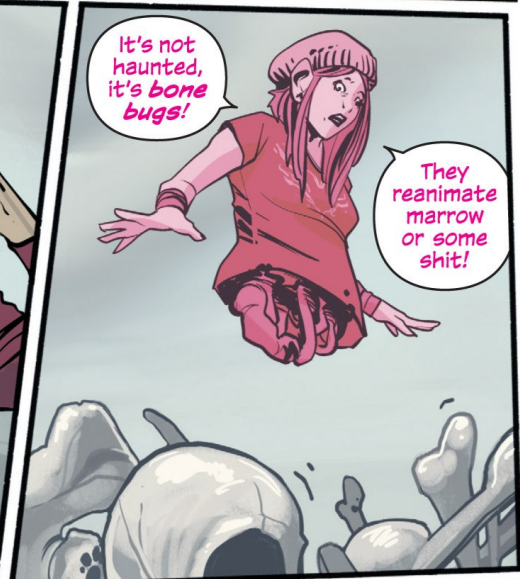
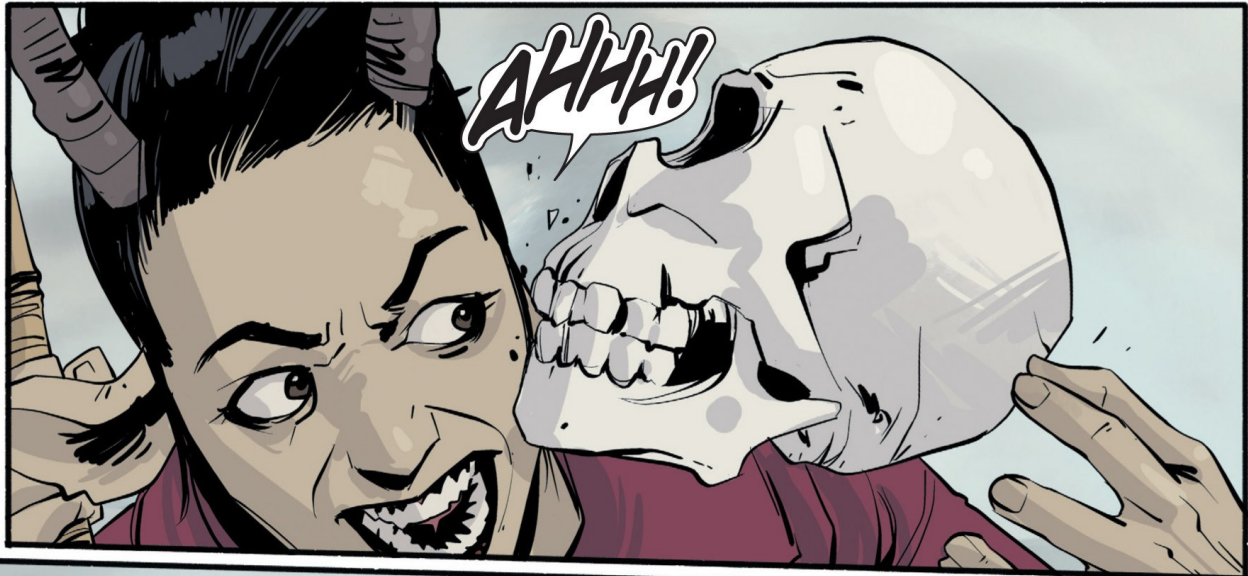
Like secondhand smoke from her first crush.

Um, those of you with legs are gonna want to watch your step.

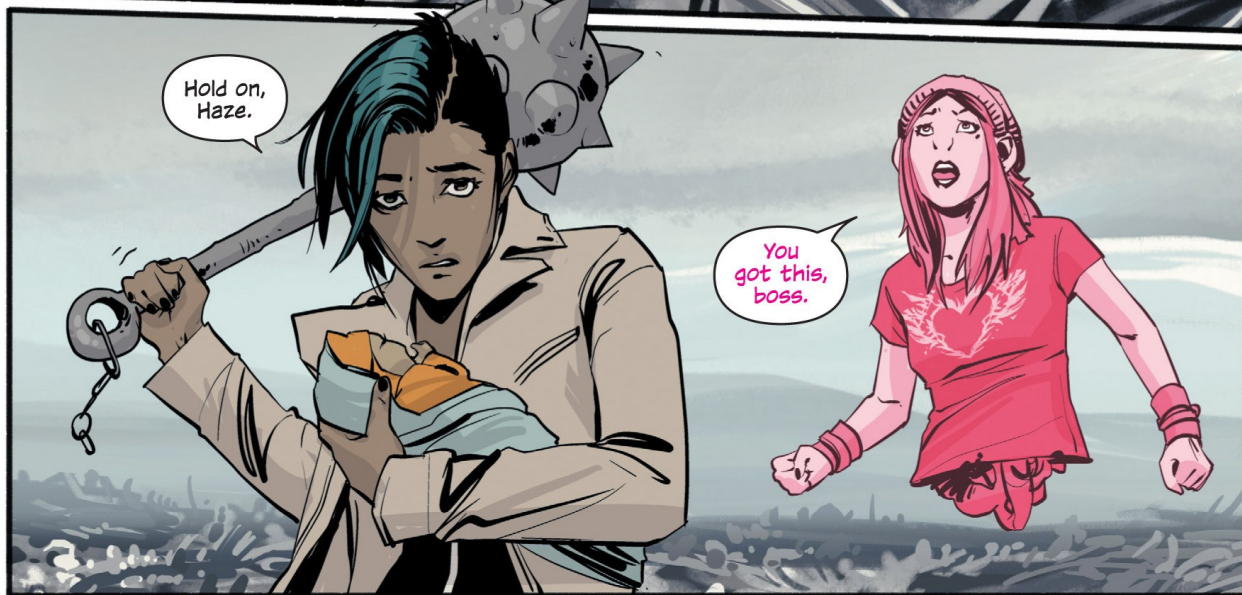




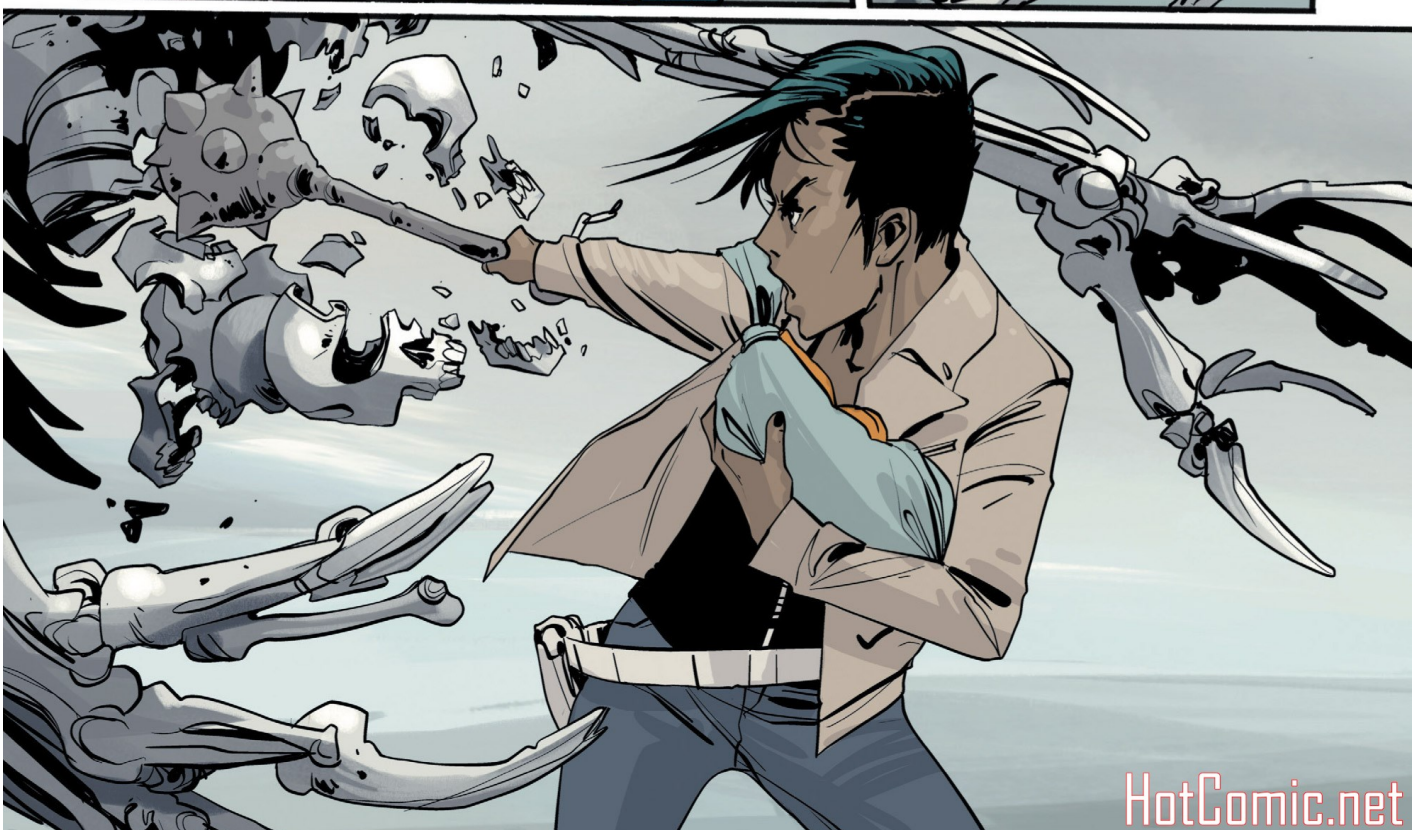














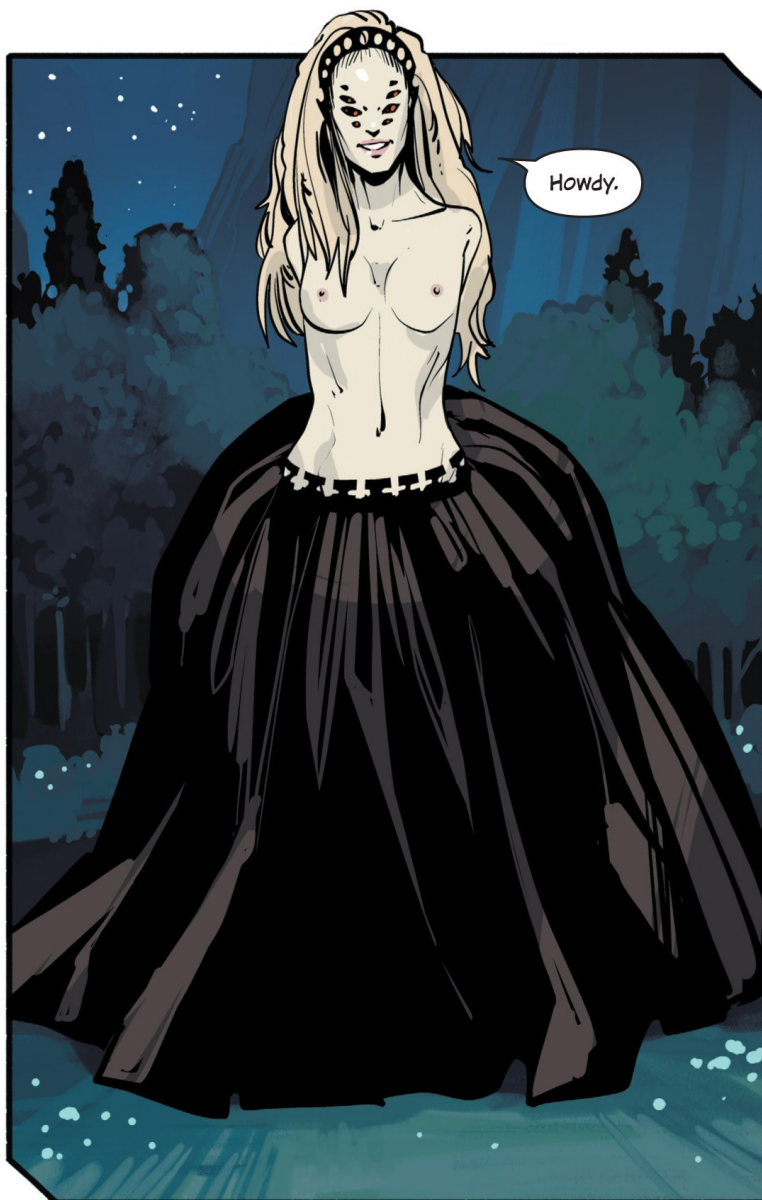


But no one makes worse first impressions than writers.



















# TO BE CONTINUED

4335 VAN NUYS BOULEVARD • SUITE 332 • SHERMAN OAKS • CA 91403

Man, we missed you guys. Thanks for waiting.

How was your summer? It's been a strange few months for Team Saga. Poor Fiona's native Calgary got flooded, my loyal dachshund Hamburger K. Vaughan had to have emergency spinal surgery, and I accidentally helped make a television show. Thankfully, we're all okay and back doing what we love most, making and/or eating comic books.

If you're one of the folks who kindly picked up our first two trades and are just now joining the monthly caravan, welcome to one of the world's last actual "letter" columns. You can send us a physical piece of mail about anything at all, but please don't send story ideas, unpublished fiction or anthrax, in that order. Everything else is fair game though, especially original artwork, bad bumper stickers from local radio stations, and questions about your college decisions. Unfortunately, we don't yet possess the technology to sign and/or return anything you might send, but our scientists will keep working.

I know I said back in Chapter Twelve that we'd return with an all-new Reader Survey, but our mailbag is still overflowing with your missives from our last arc, so we'll wait to interrogate you with personal questions until next month, cool?

But before we get to your thoughts about our story, the most frequently asked question from readers actually involved the dramatic marriage proposal we posted in this very column way back in Chapter Eleven. The world is dying to know, did Alex say yes to Chase...?

*Dear Saga Team,*

*The day Saga #11 came out was the most important new comic day either of us will ever remember. The day went as smoothly as possible. When Alex got home, she went to read Saga right away before doing anything else. When she reached the end of the first letter, she turned to find me on one knee with the ring presented, tears streaming down my face. We both smiled and cried and hugged on the floor, after she fell out of her chair. Movies make proposals look far too clean.*

*We talked a lot over the next couple days about getting engaged and planning a wedding. We're both still pretty young and neither of us wants to plan a wedding for several years. So we're going to hold off on taking the ring out in public and changing our Facebook statuses. The plan is to make it official when we are both ready to set a date. For now, we're going to travel the world, focus on our careers, and keep reading lots of comics.*

*So the ring is safely stored, waiting for the day when we want to start planning our wedding. Someday in the distant future, our kids will get to read Saga (as soon as they're old enough to deal with oversized testicles).*

*Thank you for helping us add another amazing chapter to our life together.*

*Chase and Alex*

*P.S. Alex and I would also like to pass along a photo, so you can place a pair of faces to the names.*



Chase, after an insane cliffhanger, that resolution was unexpected, somewhat ambiguous, slightly wistful, and yet oddly hopeful. Perfect for two readers of Saga. Hope you're both still as happy as you look in that picture, and please let us know whatever happens next.

*Dearest Team,*

*Thanks for Chapter 12. I was thrilled that we were finally introduced to Alana's cyclopean hero. It was also great to have a chapter with so much time devoted to Prince Robot IV. The whole controversy online was silly. I like my Saga just the way it is.*

*I have to ask: was the baby seal character planned in the script, or was that something Fiona came up with? He was adorable and whimsical and I'm now half convinced he's going to die in some gruesome fashion.*

*These hiatus months are hard, though it helps knowing that Fiona keeps posting her beautiful work online, and that The Private Eye should be coming out in the meantime. I'm also going to give some follow-up gifts to people who got Volume One for Christmas, but were too foolish to start picking up the issues. By the time Chapter 13 is ready I hope to have more friends I can talk to about Saga on a monthly basis.*

*Brian mentioned some of the comics he's been reading lately.*



*I'd love to hear the same from Fiona. What are you reading and enjoying? What are some of your all-time favourites?*

*Until Chapter 13, waiting as patiently as a guy can on the edge of his seat,  
George Sager  
Toronto, ON*

Thanks, George, especially for plugging *The Private Eye*, my new crime comic with artist Marcos Martin about privacy in the year 2076. It's an exclusively online series that now has three whole issues available for whatever you want to pay over at [PanelSyndicate.com](http://PanelSyndicate.com).

And yeah, the seal guy and his buddy (who I've tainted with the names Ghüs and Walrus Friend) are 100% the creation of Fiona Staples, though one or both of those characters may end up playing an important role in our epic.

As for some of her favorite comics, Fiona says, "Right now I'm reading some cool new sci-fi comics: *Six-Gun Gorilla* by Simon Spurrier and Jeff Stokely, and *Killjoys* by Becky Cloonan, Gerard Way, and Shaun Simon. I've also been enjoying IDW's 'Best of' *Archie* hardcovers, especially the Harry Lucey and Samm Schwartz ones. Some of my all-time favourite comics are *Love & Rockets*, *Black & White* by Taiyo Matsumoto, and the old EC and Warren horror magazines."

Excellent taste, no? As always, please check out [essentiasequential.com](http://essentiasequential.com) for all of your Staples staples, and follow Fiona on Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, Argle-bargle and Etcetera.

Dear BKV,

*My name is Misha. I'm a huge fan of your work—Ex Machina, Y: The Last Man, and now Saga. My meet-up graphic novel/comic book club is reading Saga this month. This will be my third time reading it. And I'm super excited.*

*Would you like to come to our meet-up? It would make our year if you came... but I/we understand if you can't make it. We are meeting at Professor Thom's 219 2nd Ave NYC on February 24, 2013 at 2pm. I know it's short notice and a long shot that you're reading this, but I thought I'd give it a shot.*

*Happy New Year,  
Misha Baker  
Jamaica, NY*

On my way!

Dear Mr. Vaughan & Ms. Staples,

*Like so many others, this is my first time writing to a letters column but today I just had to.*

*My wife and I have had quite a week. Last Tuesday, after a solid week of contractions, she gave birth to a beautiful little girl, our first child. She is healthy and feisty and wonderful.*

*For the last few years my grandfather has been battling throat cancer. Every day for the last six months I've expected to get the news that he had passed. My greatest desire, though, was that he would live long enough to see his first great-grandchild born. He did. He was a great-grandfather for exactly one week. He died in his bed late last night while I was changing my daughter's diaper some thousand miles away. Completely oblivious.*

*I don't want this to turn into a eulogy so I'll just say he was the best grandfather I could ask for.*

*About an hour ago I got home from work and cuddled up to my wife and daughter and we had a good cry. To cheer me up she encouraged me to read some comics. Together we read Chapter Eleven. The chuckles we shared over Alana and Marko's dialogue those first few pages were good medicine. And then we got to the end...and we cried a little more. I just had to write you and thank you for writing this story for ME. It may be the most humanly honest work of fiction I have ever read and I mean that as my highest compliment.*

*Barr's words "I was never a great father to that boy...but I was always loyal to his mother," spoke to me in ways I couldn't express in this already long-winded letter (sorry!). I don't think my grandfather thought all that much of his parenting skills but if he was one thing, it was devoutly loyal to my grandmother. His last words to her were, "I don't want to leave you." She told him, "Go to Jesus," and I'm told he died contentedly.*

*While writing this, my father came over. (It was his dad who died.) My mother drove him because quote, "Today, he needed to hold a baby." I swear he looked at my daughter with the same expression Barr did on that third panel from the bottom, pg14. Then he talked about her eyes. He smiled and he cried. And I knew everything was right with the universe.*

*You have totally captured (in both word and art) the truth of humanity. Thank you for making my day a little easier.*

*Sincerely,  
Brendon  
East Helena, MT*

*P.S. On a slightly lighter note, my daughter's umbilical cord stump fell off today. I seriously considered sending it to you as some sort of disgusting, disturbing joke. But I didn't. You're welcome!*

Very sorry for your loss, Brendon, but sincere congrats on your girl. So it goes, huh?

Mr. Vaughan,

*I didn't grow up on comics (partly because I don't believe I ever saw a comic shop where I grew up in Bogotá, Colombia, but mostly because I was too busy learning how to swallow balloons full of cocaine [preemptive strike against the inevitable "Colombia: druglord" joke]). So I am a relatively new fan to the genre.*

*The first series I read was your Y: The Last Man series and I was immediately, irreversibly hooked. Although, the danger of starting your comic-reading career with Y, I learned, is that it's kind of like never eating food before and then starting with bacon: nothing is better than bacon.*

*Then Saga came along and I was like, BAM, bacon on a cupcake.*

*So I just wanted to say thank you for introducing me to comics (I have bags and boards now! Also, I know what "bags and boards" are!) and for continuing to draw me into deliciously wacky and wonderful landscapes in Saga.*

*Also, fuck you for killing off Lying Cat in issue #10.*

*Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Gill  
Columbus, OH*

Right, I almost forgot about Lying Cat! After Chapter Ten, we got more irate letters and pretend (?) death threats than for any other moment of the series. But



following The Will's successful rescue attempt in Chapter Eleven, most people seemed grateful and relieved, like Royersford, PA artist Mike Pouch, who sent the following:



Still, not everyone was pleased about America's favorite Sidekick getting a ninth life...

Dear Brian & Fiona,

I will do my best to keep this letter succinct, and I have been wanting to write to you for a while now. At least until recently, I have been very much in love with your comic. It has been the comic perhaps most instrumental in getting me to buy single issues again, something I hadn't done regularly since I was a kid.

I figured merely sending praise would be tiresome, as I am certain you both have been receiving a seemingly endless amount of it (much deserved of course). I then thought it might be interesting to inquire as to your writing habits and environment preferences, and perhaps also see if you might have any suggestions to other writers looking to break into the world of comics as well, however much of this line of questioning seems to have been covered more or less with previous letters.

Then I seemed to recall encouragement in the first issue to send creative things not pertaining to the series, and since I have an album coming out soon that I have been working on for some time now (my first release on vinyl!) I thought that might be a nice gift to send, as I feel it is going to be pretty great (although I am currently unaware as to whether or not either of you enjoy/collect vinyl recordings). However, the 'test pressings' have taken forever, and after the last issue, I felt I must speak up!

The issue in question (#11) contained what I felt was such a blatant disregard for physics and biology that my suspension of disbelief may very well have been blown to the point where I might not be able to continue reading your beautiful comic!

As I can only imagine you have by now received numerous other letters to this effect, the scene in question is of course the recovery of "Lying Cat." As with most readers, by the end of issue 10, I figured she was (sadly) a goner. The shock was enough for me to gloss over the fact that due to the instantaneous depressurization that would occur on The Will's 'ship,' they ALL would have been sucked out into the vacuum of 'space,' not to mention every atom of oxygen sucked out of their lungs with so much force it would kill them pretty much instantly... (likely destroying their lungs and faces in the process, at the very least!)

With the rescue of Lying Cat however, I felt this disregard was rubbed in my face to the point where I found it difficult

to continue reading. There does appear to be some sort of shielding or forcefield that materializes to cover the ship's torn hull upon The Will & L.C.'s return, but no mention of indication as to how they survived in the interim. Perhaps you may be wondering, "What?! You can buy a rocketship made from a tree, teleporting horned moon-people, etc., but not this?" The answer is Yes. Trees are known to create oxygen and breathe carbon dioxide, humans/mammals essentially do the opposite, works for me!

(I found it quite clever actually. The Will's vessel however I find harder to swallow, considering that its 'propeller' would have no air or water to 'propel against' in space.)

Funny how easy it can be to forget something that we not only do all the time and is crucial to our vital function, but a good portion of our face and guts are "designed" in order for us to do so. If The Will were somehow evolved to live or survive in exoatmospheric conditions, his body would function quite differently from ours. One would think this would somehow reflect in his appearance/physicality as well, perhaps even covering up exposed 'holes' to prevent depressurization within his own body.

Is this your way of introducing to us that these are all "super-beings" somehow? They have all up to this point seemed so fragile, or "real" even, where as now they no longer even seem physical to me. Are they indeed intended to be apparitions, or dream-projections of some sort? If this were the case, should they not be able to fly as well? Is this simply the case of some sort of "unstoppable molecules" type solution thus far mentioned? Or maybe we've just been witnessing another one of The Will's dreams.

Perhaps you already have plans to address this, but it does seem jarring to present these very familiar "human-like" beings, whom do seem to feel pain, fear bodily harm, and be subject to some laws of physics, then all of a sudden seem to no longer have these laws apply to them. Even if the being that was thought to be a planet has a large enough mass to have its own atmosphere, they would certainly seem to be outside of it. I imagine if nothing else they would be liable to freeze to death!

If hope this missive has not come off as sounding rude or closed-minded. I merely wish for our intergalactic travelers, whom we have all grown so fond of, to be safe while traversing the night.

Chris Cooley  
Los Angeles, CA

That wasn't rude or close-minded at all, Chris. Saga may be set in a fictional science-fantasy universe of crazy make 'em ups, but we still try to think carefully about making sure our rules are consistent. Even in the "real" universe, a healthy human being can survive in the vacuum of space much longer than Hollywood has led us to believe, and I think we played fair according to the pre-established strengths and weaknesses of each passenger aboard The Will's (completely scientifically accurate) Star-Copter. Plus, as we'll see, that brief exposure to the void will still have long-term health consequences for at least one of our intergalactic travelers.

In other words, no No-Prize for you, effendi! But we hope you keep reading, and best of luck with your album.

Speaking of which, has everyone listened to the Adam WarRock tune "Family Matters," inspired by this very comic? I



know I'm biased, but it's probably the best English-language song since David Bowie's "Golden Years."

Ahoy Saga Team,

I'm a manager for the Jim Hanley's Universe comic store chain in New York City (you once name-dropped us in an issue of *Ex Machina*, one of a billion reasons why I love that book). Let me just thank you, from a retailer perspective, for making a book that is so bloody easy to sell. It's one of our best-selling books (individual sales and trades, hell yes), which is a testament to the work's quality. Make no mistakes, shit sells, but *Saga* ain't shit and what keeps people coming back is just how good it is. There are few things more satisfying in life than getting a good comic in someone's hands, and the opportunity to push this book to hungry readers is a unique thrill each and every time.

Oh, how I love this comic! I read a LOT of comics and there are few books quite like *Saga*, that unique indescribable pull on one's psyche that a damn fine work's distinct flavor can have, that *Saga* most definitely has. The combination of Brian's writing and Fiona's art, even Fonografiks' design all work together in filling a slot in my very being I didn't know I had open or needed filled 'til this book came along and expanded my mind all over the back of my braincase. I can't wait for the next shot—and I think there is a consensus among our regulars at JHU that we're willing to wait for it if it means the quality is still there. Fill-ins suck, but Fiona doesn't suck so we wait. And the delivery in the end is always worth it.

As of this scribbling, I have bought the first trade for 3 customers and counting, folks who were on the fence for whatever reason or for whom I knew the book would be perfect. (They all came back for more.) Again, I live for this shit, and the opportunity to get a book like this out into the world is worth the Hamilton.

Thanks thanks thanks a zillion times over,  
Jeffrey O. Gustafson  
Brooklyn, NY

P.S. Yeah, comics are my life, but this is my first letter to a letter page. Took over two decades to find the right one.

P.P.S. Lyssa K—who won the costume contest last ish—shops at our store! It was so amazing seeing what she pulled off and she totally deserved the top spot!

You rule, Jeffrey. And your customers are pretty sweet, too. Thanks for the ideal first letter, and for being one of the very best retailers in the best city for comic stores on the planet.

(Along with Tokyo, maybe? Oh, and definitely Paris!)

Fiona and I were fortunate enough to get to go to Paris recently with esteemed *Y: The Last Man* co-creator Pia Guerra and the most significant team of Significant Others ever assembled, all courtesy Urban Comics, our fantastic French publisher. If any of our fellow creators at Image are looking for someone to handle their international editions, Fiona and I can't recommend Urban highly enough, and not just because of how well they treated us on this trip. The first French hardcover of *Saga* is exquisite, so thanks again to François Hercouet and his whole team for taking such good care of our work.

Hello Saga Team,

Mr. Vaughan, I love your writing... *Y: The Last Man*,

*Runaways*, and *Ex Machina* are among the best comics I've read in almost 30 years enjoying comics. I recently read *The Private Eye* #1, and I also thought it was excellent. I'm also enjoying *Saga* at the moment.

But after reading *Saga* #11's letter page, I am a bit ticked at something quite dickish you did. One reader (Alex) asks if there's ever going to be merchandising for the book, such as posters, because he saw one at his local comic store but it wasn't for sale, it was a promotional item. You told him that no, there are no plans for posters, but that artist Fiona Staples will offer prints of some of the covers through her website.

Fast-forward a few letters later, and you select another reader's letter as letter of the month (because she sent it with a pair of white canvas sneakers she painted with characters from the book).

What are the prize items for this second reader? A few knick-knacks, a signed copy of the current issue...and one of the very same promotional posters the other reader (Alex) coveted a few letters back. And you specifically say "one of those ultra-rare 'not for sale' *Saga* promo posters that Alex was coveting a few letters back." And then drive it home by adding something to the effect of "tough break, Alex, next time try sending my dog some comfortable shoes to gnaw on."

Was it really necessary to rub it in the guy's face? Was it really necessary to include one of those posters in the prize for the reader that sent the sneakers? I mean, as far as I recall, the letter of the month prize is not set, it's usually just a signed issue and some other items. This seems unnecessarily dickish... really... Maybe the guy can't afford Fiona's prints (although someone later pointed out to me that they're just 20 bucks) and he wanted to spend what, 5 or 8 or 10 bucks on a cool poster because he really loves your book and supports it every month... and you do this?

If you are not making posters of the book, couldn't you just have given the winning letter's sender something else instead of one of these posters? Another signed issue, a sketch, a postcard, anything but one of the posters Alex mentioned in his letter? The ones you rub in that he's not getting while this other reader is?

Man... dick move. There was no need for this.

Martín A. Pérez (MaGnUs)  
Montevideo, Uruguay

P.S. Thanks to a friend for mailing this letter for me from within the US so it'd get there faster, since we can't send emails to *Saga*.

You know what, Martín? You're absolutely right. And for using the outdated postal services of no fewer than two different countries just to call me a dick, Hamburger has selected YOU as this month's winner of some kickshaws from the Almighty Prize Drawer, including a signed copy of this issue, a losing California Lottery scratch-off ticket, a tiny wooden brush, and most importantly, my very last copy of the ultra-rare "not for sale" promotional *Saga* poster that loser Alex wanted so badly. Enjoy!

Thanks again for coming back, and I hope you'll all join us again next month, as we introduce a new character from Alana's past...

Your pal,  
Brian



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OCTOBER 

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protagonist

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# MINUTEMEN

SYL3NT BOB

